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the inverse squares of the distances, thus marking lines of least resistance in which all the bodies will infallibly seek to approach each other," and causing what is known as gravitation. And lastly, the sun's spots are caused by the interception by the planets "of a portion of the emanations of a wide belt of the heavens." We are conscious that in the above condensed statement of a principle we do but scant justice to the author. The reader will find, however, that the whole subject is very clearly and forcibly put in this treatise, and in a style which makes it readable and interesting to persons of even moderate scientific attainments.

IV.

SKETCHES OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY AND PEOPLE.

THE author of "Dead Souls"* has a European celebrity which lends the charm of anticipation to the opening chapters of these volumes, but which does not prevent their becoming rather dull reading. As journeys of a typical kind of Russian gentleman, "neither a beauty nor yet very plain in his personal appearance; neither too stout nor too thin," and neither old nor young, they have the merit of introducing us to living characters that few of us, probably, have met, and to social and geographical surroundings also peculiar. The "Dead Souls" rather darken the title and raise expectations of horrors and tragedies, which are doomed to disappointment. As a picture of Russian life and manners the book has a value of course, but it takes some time in reading it to discover that "dead souls" are simply "dead serfs," and that their connection with the journeys, adventures, and scrapes of our unpronounceable friend is simply objective. He wishes, for reasons which it takes a long time to find out, to buy up the title to the ownership of a certain number of serfs. The standing and wealth of a Russian is estimated in part by the number of his serfs. He owns these people, body and soul—at least he did so under the old *régime*—and after their death he keeps their names on his records; and the object of Tchitchikoff is to induce proprietors of serfs to transfer their "dead souls" to him. There is no plot, no outcome of this, as far as we can discover, and the idea of buying up the title to dead men's bones—which at first is suggestive of the most delightfully mysterious horrors—is simply a peg upon which to hang a kind of extended diary of a jog-trot journey through the empire. For the rest, the book is Russian, and the author is Gogol, and it should be read, of course.

Now and then there is scope for some good sarcasm; indeed, the book itself may be taken as an extended satire on Russian institutions. In a certain town the good people who show attention to our traveler gossip to each other about the destination of these "dead souls." It has got abroad that Tchitchikoff intends to colonize a distant province. One person suggests that our friend will find it difficult to manage so many serfs—that hundreds and thousands of them will run away. Another answers that the Russian peasant never runs away—whither can he run? Then it is suggested that there must be many bad characters among them, and a wise head wonders how they are all to be transported to their destination. To all these points our traveler replies in an easy, off-hand way, and intimates that all his "souls" are of a singularly, quiet and peaceable character, that the question of transportation does not trouble him, and that he has not the slightest fear of his souls running away; and so on. On another occasion a public functionary, who has lost a number of serfs by cholera, hunts up Tchitchikoff in the hope of indemnifying himself for his great loss

* "Tchitchikoff's Journeys; or, Dead Souls." By Nikolai Vasilievitch Gogol. Translated from the Russian. T. Y. Crowell. 2 vols.

by selling the carcasses. There is a good deal that is grotesque and humorous in some of the scenes and characters described, but the book is terribly prolix.

V.

CONVENTIONAL CANT AS A BRITISH FAILING.

To search for national failings, even with the view of prescribing a remedy for them, is not the most agreeable or easy of tasks, but it is one that entitles a capable and earnest writer to attention and respect. In reading this book * the American man may feel calmly judicial and sternly impartial. Except as he may have a share of British blood in *his* veins he may take these strictures with perfect coolness and even enjoy them. We can afford to take our time in discovering what an English author—for such we presume Mr. Whitman to be—has to say on a subject on which English people are usually a trifle sensitive. If it were an American who had written about the conventional faults of our trans-Atlantic cousins, we could readily anticipate what he might have to say, but for an Englishman to chastise the English is a very refreshing spectacle, and is calculated to awaken some little curiosity on this side of the world. There is a great deal in the book that is worthy of attention, and we hope that not only our English relatives, but some of our own people may profit by it.

The author does not, at the start, give a very precise definition of cant, but he distinguishes between the cant which is conventional and that which goes by the name of religious cant or hypocrisy, with which he does not deal. Before defining his subject he gives us an essay on pharisaism, or that insular pride in things English which peculiarly pervades the middle and untraveled classes. In this connection he makes a fling at English efforts to “convert” the heathen and the Jews, and at certain instances of foreign intermeddling, and he adds: “There are signs abroad that we are not so cocksure of our own excellence in everything as we used to be.” This is very well for an Englishman, and very satisfactory to the rest of mankind, besides which it is expressed in a thoroughly English fashion, and our readers will no doubt say “Amen.”

What do English people think of the expression “toadying debasement before rank and social power—one of the greatest blemishes of the English race?” This is pretty good!

As an instance of social cant, the author alludes to the practice of public speakers interlarding their speeches with Latin or Greek quotations. “These quotations are not meant for popular consumption; they are merely canting clap-trap, recalling references to the social position of the speakers and their hearers.” There is a lesson for our future valedictorians! Another instance of cant is the peculiar way of pronouncing certain aristocratic family names. “That a man whose name is Marjoribanks should call himself Marchbanks—that Leveson Gower should be pronounced Lewson Gore, and Cholmondely Chumley—would in any other country but England be suggestive of insanity.” Then there is an aristocratic “coldness of manner,” and a middle class “grin of amiability,” and lastly a habit of self-depreciation with a gushing appreciation of others—all of which are stigmatized and rebuked, and which, we regret to say, are not peculiar to England.

As to manners, they are affected and artificial, with an awkward aiming at naturalness which does not, after all, succeed. A man is ashamed to say “my wife;” he must speak of her as Mrs. A. or Mrs. X. The best mannered people in

* “Conventional Cant; its Results and Remedy.” By Sidney Whitman. Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co.